

MINUTES
WOODSTOCK CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

June 28, 2021
City Council Chambers

A Strategic Planning Session of the Woodstock City Council was called to order at 3:00 PM on Monday, June 28, 2021, by Mayor Michael Turner in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall. Mayor Turner welcomed those present, noting the purpose of this meeting is a discussion among Staff and Council of a number of strategic topics.

A roll call was taken.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Darrin Flynn, Lisa Lohmeyer, Tom Nierman, Wendy Piersall, Bob Seegers, Jr., Gordon Tebo, and Mayor Michael Turner.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Roscoe Stelford, City Attorney Ruth Schlossberg, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director Paul Christensen, Public Works Director Christina Betz, Economic Development Director Garrett Anderson, Building and Zoning Director Joe Napolitano, Human Resources Director Deb Schober, IT Director Dan McElmeel, Opera House Managing Director Daniel Campbell, City Planner Darrell Moore, Assistant Public Works Director Brent Aymond, Economic Development Coordinator Krista Coltrin, Grants/Communications Manager Terry Willcockson, and City Clerk Cindy Smiley.

City Clerk Smiley confirmed that the agenda before the Council was a true and correct copy of the published agenda.

III. FLOOR DISCUSSION

A. Public Comments

There were no comments forthcoming from the Public.

B. Council Comments

Councilman Tebo asked if fireworks being set off by the public can be curtailed, noting he has received complaints from the public. He stated many veterans with PTSD are bothered by them, as are older citizens and dogs. Mr. Stelford stated fireworks are not allowed in the City unless prescribed by the State, noting if the Police Department finds someone who is doing this, they could be fined. He stated historically the challenge is the offender disappears before the Police Department arrives. Mr. Stelford stated they do their best in a very difficult situation. Following a brief discussion, Mayor Turner suggested a statement be drafted reminding people that fireworks are against the City Code and disrupts everyone around them.

Councilman Flynn noted the Miss Woodstock pageant was held last Thursday evening with a new Miss Woodstock and Little Miss Woodstock being selected, noting they have already visited local businesses. He stated the Opera House did a great job with this event.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by W. Piersall, second by G. Tebo, to approve the Consent Agenda.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, there were no items removed from the Consent Agenda by the Council or the Public.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, the following comments or questions were forthcoming from the Council or the Public regarding items remaining on the Consent Agenda:

Item A - Warrants

In response to a question from Councilman Seegers regarding the \$88,000 donation to District 200 noted on Page 16, Mr. Stelford stated this was for impact fees, with Mr. Christensen providing additional information.

Item B – 1 – Resolution – TIF Inducement, 140 Cass Street

Councilman Seegers asked if a Proforma identifying the potential increase in assessed value will be required at some point. Mr. Stelford noted it is, but not at the time of the Inducement Resolution. He explained this Resolution will allow the developer to keep track of his costs, and certain eligible costs may be reimbursed at a later date, noting this Resolution merely “starts the clock” for keeping track of costs, but does not guarantee reimbursement.

In response to a question from Councilman Flynn, Mr. Stelford stated the building owner is not included in this agreement at this time, but an adjustment can be made at a later date.

Mayor Turner affirmed the Consent Agenda to include items A through B-1 as follows:

A. WARRANTS: 3960 3961

B. MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 182

- 1. Resolution – TIF Inducement, 140 Cass Street - Approval of Resolution 21-O-13, identified as Document 1, *A Resolution of the City of Woodstock, McHenry County, Illinois, to Induce the Redevelopment of Certain Property within the Woodstock TIF#2 Downtown & Route 47 (140 Cass Street)***

A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: D. Flynn, L. Lohmeyer, T. Nierman, W. Piersall, B. Seegers, G. Tebo, and Mayor M. Turner. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none. Motion carried.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mayor Turner stated the purpose of this workshop is to give Council the opportunity to discuss these items from a strategic perspective, set priorities, and give direction to Staff, noting it is a continuation of discussions held at the prior Council Strategic Planning Session in early June.

a. City Organization Re-Structure Update

Noting this topic was discussed at the prior Workshop, Mayor Turner stated he has since had the opportunity to have a more detailed discussion with Mr. Stelford, following which he asked Mr. Stelford and Mr. Christensen to move forward to investigate funding such a change in structure.

Mr. Stelford shared discussions he has had with other professionals in the municipal industry, stating he is performing due diligence, noting he is looking at what this looks like in other communities, identifying what is good about it and what the challenges are, so that the City can maximize the success. He stated he and Mr. Christensen are looking at how the City can pay for the positions being discussed.

Mayor Turner stated when ready, this item will be subject for consideration by the Council in the future, hopefully at the July 20 meeting.

b. Enhanced Street Maintenance Program

Mayor Turner noted this is also a continuation of the discussion from the prior Strategic Planning Session, stating his intent is not to make a final decision at this time, but to prepare for a future meeting when Council will have the opportunity to engage in a more detailed discussion and consider whether to move forward.

Mr. Stelford presented spreadsheets and more detailed information on the previously discussed options C, D, and E. He also presented information on the need for and potential cost of water and sewer improvements that will be needed as part of the Enhanced Streets Program. He also noted the need and costs for maintenance must be considered, stating all understand the need to increase and improve the streets program, but this requires increased revenues to pay for these costs. Mayor Turner stated there is no doubt this is an expectation of the community, but the community does not want to increase property taxes.

Discussion followed of the cost of each option per year and overall, the number of streets that would be done and when, the number of years each would take, and the resultant improvement in PCIs with each option short- and long-term. Mayor Turner asked for additional information on failed streets, opining it is essential for Council to know how many failed streets will be left with each option.

Ms. Betz noted the recently approved IMS study will provide updated information, including on PCI ratings, and an update concerning the failed streets. She stated this will validate the information that was put together to move forward and also validate the funding amount. In response to a question from Mayor Turner, Ms. Betz stated this study will be done in 6 to 9 months. She noted there is \$13 million of streets already designed that can be constructed in the meantime. She also provided information on what the expected PCI levels will be at the various funding levels.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, Mr. Christensen confirmed the City can issue debt in pieces as decisions are made, including pulling back on debt.

Mayor Turner stated Council has clarity for the next two years. He stated it now needs clarity on the failed roads, with Mr. Stelford opining they must be done. Mayor Turner stated the question is do we use an increase in water and sewer rates to fund the work underneath the roads and then increase property taxes by between \$170 and \$250 per year on a \$200,000 house to fund the streets program.

In response to Councilwoman Piersall's questions concerning debt load and what else may be needed in the next 5 to 10 years, Mr. Stelford explained the City's position on debt load as a Home

Rule Community and what the legal debt load is. He noted Council's objective of growth and development will increase the EAV, which will also expand the City's debt capacity. He stated these are things Council will have to consider.

Noting the market capacity for debt is crucial, Mr. Stelford explained this further including what could happen should the City be downgraded. He stated Staff has met with the City's financial advisor who reviewed the City's bond rating and debt, noting they concluded the City could be downgraded in the future to AA-. Discussion followed of possible future projects for which the City may need to issue bonds, including how the TIF could be used.

Opining interest rates may go up, Councilwoman Piersall asked what effect this would have. In response, Mr. Christensen stated rates are currently low in the short-term. Councilman Seegers agreed longer-term rates are stable, noting Staff's projections are very conservative and do not project any EAV increase. Mayor Turner stated he would never want to put the City in a position to have a problem securing debt, but he does not feel that is the case here.

In response to a question from Councilwoman Piersall concerning District 200's decision concerning their debt, Mr. Stelford stated they chose to spread it out. Asking that this be confirmed, Mayor Turner noted for 10 years the City has forgone any PTELL increases to property taxes and the City's percentage of property taxes has gone down. He stated the City must manage its own affairs, noting \$240 per year is \$20 per month. He opined the sewer and water rate and property tax model are the least painful ways to pay for this type of improvement that the community wants.

In response to Councilman Tebo's questions concerning the added cost to borrowing should the City's rating dropped, discussion followed with Mr. Christensen noting timing the borrowing could mitigate this. Discussion followed of sources of funding, including the 1% sales tax, \$.03 increase in MFT, and increased property taxes, with Mayor Turner noting some of this revenue is already being used. He asked that this be clearly summarized for Council prior to future discussion and consideration.

Discussion followed of the schedule of roads to be included with this proposal, with Councilman Tebo opining residents should know this. Ms. Betz stated while this information is already available, the IMS study will provide a plan with an updated schedule. In response to a question from Councilman Seegers, Ms. Betz stated the City will have a better idea of whether \$2 million is enough for maintenance after the IMS study is completed.

Mr. Christensen provided additional information on the various ways debt is issued. Mayor Turner noted this is a 20-year commitment, which is why the increase is small.

In response to questions from Councilman Seegers concerning engineering costs and selection, Ms. Betz stated 10% is typical and explained the selection process currently used, including how it saves time and money. Mayor Turner stated he is comfortable with the firms used by the City, opining the process creates efficiency and lessens risk.

In response to a question from Councilwoman Piersall, Mayor Turner stated no decision on which option is selected will be made today, noting further discussion is needed and a decision must be made on failed roads.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, it was the consensus of the City Council that Staff tighten up the three options for discussion and possible decision on the Enhanced Streets Program at an upcoming City Council meeting.

Noting at times Council must make difficult decisions, Mayor Turner noted this discussion to expend funds and increase property taxes should move forward in light of the need. He noted the streets will not stay where they are, but will only get worse.

c. Public Art/Murals

Noting there has been a resignation on the Arts Commission, Mayor Turner stated he would like to have a Council discussion concerning the intent of public art within the city before filling the position. He stated he views the Arts Commission as having two prongs: Conceptual – what are people connected to and interested in, the arts they may dream of; and Specific – identifying places for public art/murals.

Opining the Benton Street building needs something, Mayor Turner stated he would like to see the Arts Commission put an idea on the table and help define parameters of what this is, with Staff support, explaining how he sees this moving forward and noting Council would make the final decision. Stating he views this as the purpose of the Arts Commission, Mayor Turner asked for Council comments.

In response to Council's questions, Mayor Turner stated there are no set parameters for serving on the Arts Commission and the Commission has not received any specific objectives. He stated they could be directed to take on specific projects, including the roundabout, or Council could take control of these projects.

Councilwoman Piersall stated as an artist she believes one purpose of public art is as an economic development engine of the community, opining the fact that Council wishes to have a mural should be only a small thing the Commission looks at.

Councilwoman Piersall opined artists should be on the Commission, and it should be a visual Arts Commission, noting most of the members are performing artists who have questioned their position on the Commission. She noted there is already a Performing Arts Commission through the Opera House, opining the two separate arts commissions could work together at times.

Councilwoman Piersall opined the Arts Commission should look at rights, materials, longevity, costs and so much more than just putting up a mural. She opined this commission needs to be not just project focused, but should put a strategy in place. She stated they could start on Benton Street, but should develop an overall strategy of how to make Woodstock an arts community, how can this bring more dollars to Woodstock, and then plan events around this strategy.

Discussion turned to a strategic plan for public art with Mayor Turner opining it should be developed if there is not one currently in place, or updated and modified if there is one. Councilman Nierman stated it should include a plan for long-term maintenance, which will require funds.

Councilwoman Lohmeyer opined as the Commission members are creative people, they should

not be tied by too many guidelines. She advocated for including someone from a college or art school. Various Councilmembers advocated for giving the Commission a clear direction and letting them develop it and make it a reality with Council having final approval. Councilman Seegers opined they should know Council wishes to increase residential home values and stated he would like to see a cost/benefit analysis.

Mayor Turner agreed with Council's comments, opining the Commission needs guidelines and freedom with visual art being the most important focus.

Krista Coltrin, Staff Liaison to the Arts Commission, stated the City Ordinance creating the Arts Commission does have a clear breakdown of its responsibilities, noting one of its powers is the creation of an Arts Development Plan which became challenging for the group. She has had discussions with Mr. Stelford about getting the Arts Development Plan done outside the Commission, opining with it in place, the Commission would have a framework to work within. Ms. Coltrin stated because this is a creative group, they find the Commission meeting format to be restraining, wishing to get together to do fundraising for example. She stated the City may wish to look at whether a commission is the appropriate structure to use. She agreed the Commission is made up of performing artists, which has created questions about their purpose, as everything comes back to the visual arts. Ms. Coltrin stated they would like to look at plans from other communities or at having it drafted by an outside source, so there are parameters in place to work within.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, it was the consensus of the Council that Staff work to develop a proposal for the Benton Street mural to go to market, including ideas, costs, etc.

d. Old Courthouse Plan – Status and Next Steps

Mayor Turner and Staff provided an update on the Old Courthouse Project, noting over the last four or five weeks there have been conversations with Ethereal and the Public House on their role in the plan and where they stand. Mayor Turner stated they City has been approached by another entity that may be a viable tenant. He stated he has asked Staff to get numbers from each entity as to what they can commit to for the project, so that Council knows what options are on the table and can get to a decision point as to what to do. He expressed his wish to bring this to Council with specificity.

Mayor Turner stated his priorities are to decide on the plan, protect the tax credits, and get things moving, which means deciding on the current plan or moving on.

Mr. Christensen provided an update on the Historic Tax Credits reminding Council the City did receive the HTC, but must sell them to a for-profit entity. He noted the City went out for proposals to do this and received numerous offers back from entities who wish to buy them, providing additional information on the requirements for this. Mr. Moore stated the City believes the total monetized value of the tax credits will be \$2.4 million, of which \$400,000 will come back to the City based on work already completed on the buildings.

Mr. Moore stated the City put out an RFQ for a Construction Manager for the project, providing information on where the RFQ was placed and what a Construction Manager will do, including developing work schedules and reviewing plans to come up with a guaranteed maximum price for the project. He stated then the project will come back to Council with all the numbers and the

fullest picture of the project.

In response to a question from Councilman Tebo, Mr. Christensen stated all four of the previously identified potential tenants are still interested, with a possible fifth as indicated by Mayor Turner.

In response to a question from Councilman Nierman, Mr. Christensen stated there is a certain amount of space allowed for a not-for-profit. Mayor Turner opined this space can go beyond what has been discussed, advocating for a private connection that does events. He opined there are other ways to make this a public space using it more creatively.

Discussion followed of the Construction Manager position duties and the finalization of the plan with Mayor Turner opining this will come quickly.

Councilman Seegers advocated for moving quickly to maximize the revenue and getting it to come in fast. He questioned whether the library use of the space will do this.

Mayor Turner stated this was an issue for him also. He stated there has been so much spent with a lot of Staff time also. He stated he is comfortable with the plan that has been developed, opining it can be tweaked. He stated, however, he does not want to continue to take staff time, but wishes to move forward to develop a great building to serve its great purpose. He stated if Council is given two options, it can make a decision, asking Staff to move quickly with potential tenants.

Council took a brief recess at 4:55 PM.

The meeting resumed at 5:04 PM with all Council members present.

e. Zoning/City Planning/Code Enforcement & City Appearance

Noting this has been discussed for some time by past Councils, Mayor Turner stated this is an opportunity for Council to discuss how aggressive it wishes to be with this issue. He opined it is the City's responsibility to have code and zoning enforcement and to make sure the public's expectations are met.

Councilman Nierman stated it is one of the reasons he got involved, noting people send him pictures of violations or unsightly situations, such as tall grass or cars parked in front yards. He stated if Woodstock wants to be successful, it needs to look successful, opining the City has to set an example and be a good steward of its property as well.

Councilman Seegers stated the landlords should be responsible for the condition of their rental properties, opining fines need to be big enough to cover the cost of manpower needed to implement and enforce the codes.

Councilwoman Lohmeyer advocated for a more aggressive approach, noting Woodstock should make a good impression on its many visitors.

A brief discussion ensued of the City's garbage contract. In response to a suggestion for a community yard waste pick-up once or twice a year, Mr. Stelford stated the concern is large amounts of waste will accumulate as residents wait for the free opportunity to dispose of this yard waste, and also that people will bring in waste into Woodstock from outside of the community.

Councilman Nierman advocated for more frequent pick up on Benton Street.

Mr. Stelford stated the City has a property maintenance code in place, noting it can be more aggressively enforced if Council wishes. Mr. Napolitano stated it is a balance with Staff trying to secure compliance, while giving people some time. He agreed Staff can be more aggressive if that is the wish.

Concerning rental property, Mr. Napolitano stated it is often difficult to track down the property owner, opining a Landlord Registration Program would help.

Mayor Turner expressed agreement with the Council's wish for more aggressive enforcement, noting that is what they have heard from residents as well.

g. Business & Rental Property Management Program

Mayor Turner stated it is his intent to bring this forward in September or October. Noting most landlords are good landlords, he opined the program would focus on those who do not take care of their property. He stated he has directed Staff to put details of such a program together and bring this forward to Council for discussion and consideration.

Concerning the Business Program, Mayor Turner stated this is about knowing what businesses are in Woodstock, which will help with planning, providing responsive customer service, and improving the strategic direction of the City. Councilman Flynn opined this will be a good Economic Development tool, noting the City cannot know what it needs if it does not know what it has. Councilman Nierman opined contractors should be required to show proof of insurance and workman's compensation.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, Councilwoman Piersall opined there are a few landlords in Woodstock who are operating dangerous properties, expressing the wish to strengthen the City's ordinances concerning this. She noted some of these landlords change their business name in order to avoid detection. Discussion ensued of the effect these landlords and their actions have on the residents, the community, and Woodstock's reputation.

Expressing support of both programs, Councilwoman Lohmeyer stated how this is presented to the business owners and the landlords is important, opining they should be made aware of the bigger picture of why the City wishes to do this.

In response to a question from Councilman Seegers, Mr. Stelford stated Staff has discussed this and is working with the City Attorney's Office to see how the Rental Property Management Program can be modified to respond to some of the landlords' concerns, noting there are many good landlords who do not wish to be forced to go into a program. He opined the challenge will be the landlords who own several properties under many corporations as described by Councilwoman Piersall. Mr. Stelford stated the proposed program, which will be brought to Council for discussion and consideration, is a Performance-Based Rental Property Management Program, which requires participation by landlords only if certain triggers are met, which he explained further. He stated the registration could also be mandated, per Council's decision.

City Attorney Schlossberg stated her office is looking at this and working with Staff, opining they

have a good handle on these issues. She stated a Home Rule community has more power, but noted that lease conditions are a difficult issue.

Mayor Turner stated these programs need to come back before Council for further discussion and decisions, noting the purpose is to improve the small number of situations that currently exist with the broader goal being to assist people in need and enhance the City.

f. Liquor Licenses/Video Gaming License Allocations

Stating the City currently has caps placed by prior Councils and also a moratorium on applying for a liquor license, which must be lifted by Council, Mayor Turner noted Council has never denied someone the right to apply.

Mayor Turner stated he is contemplating proposing giving the Liquor Commissioner the right to waive the moratorium on applications, and changing or removing the metrics which tie licenses to population. Noting there are video gaming license applications in the cue and new businesses under construction that will come before Council for liquor and video gaming licenses, Mayor Turner opined this will expedite the process, while maintaining Council control of what businesses it wishes to license.

Mr. Stelford noted tying the number of licenses to population is not mentioned in State statutes stating the downside of this policy is that it does not take into account a growing population. He stated giving the Mayor the ability to waive the moratorium will improve the process, noting if he denies a request, the petitioner will still have the ability to appeal this decision before the City Council.

City Attorney Schlossberg urged Council to continue its practice of limiting the number of licenses to match the number that are issued, creating a new license for any new applicant approved. She also urged Council to continue to remove any license if a licensed business goes out of business or relinquishes its license, again making sure the number of licenses available match the number of active licenses issued.

A brief discussion ensued of the Mayor's suggestion of removing the population metrics. In response to Council questions, City Attorney Schlossberg stated Home Rule provides Council the ability to create its video gaming license in the same way it does liquor licenses. Mr. Stelford noted video game revenue is allocated to the Police Department.

In response to a question from Mayor Turner, it was the consensus of the Council to bring this to a future Council meeting for further discussion and consideration.

h. Federal Stimulus Money Usage

Mayor Turner noted Staff created a list, which will be circulated to Council for review and to forward comments to Mr. Stelford. He noted the rules have not been completely set, opining they will have maximum flexibility and will have to make decisions on this, stating a more detailed discussion will occur at a later date.

i. Lobbyist – State Priorities

Mayor Turner stated he, Councilman Tebo, and members of Staff have had the great opportunity of joining Joyce Nardulli in Springfield, the last time in 2019. He stated he has also had the

opportunity to vote on the contract with Ms. Nardulli's firm, noting when he was new and uninformed he questioned the need for spending money on this. He stated he could not have been more wrong in that assessment. Noting her skill, Mayor Turner stated if the City wants Rt. 47 improvements, it better have partners working for it, noting Ms. Nardulli's firm is worth every dollar paid to them. He introduced Ms. Nardulli.

Ms. Nardulli gave her background, noting she has been a lobbyist for 30 years, with her daughter joining the firm 5 years ago. She stated they also represent the McHenry County Council of Governments, which is wonderful for coordination. She stated she also coordinates with other groups, which help her clients providing information on how this helps Woodstock.

She then talked about the various projects which she is working including Rt. 47 improvements, HB 185, LGDF, Police Reform, Ethics Reform, Primary Date Change, Lead Pipe Replacement, Grant Programs, and others, providing specific details about what is being done on these to benefit Woodstock.

Ms. Nardulli stated the Governor's office was very excited about the City's brochure created for the Rt. 47 improvements campaign, noting they asked for a few more to pass out to other communities as examples. She stated this greatly helped get Woodstock's history out there at a time when the Governor is receiving 664 pieces of legislation.

Councilman Tebo urged other Council members to go on the Springfield drive-down should they have the opportunity. Mayor Turner agreed, noting it is an opportunity to meet and talk with people, stating relationships and communication matter. He opined it was a great experience.

Mayor Turner expressed Council's thanks and appreciation to Ms. Nardulli and all at her firm.

ADJOURN

Motion by D. Flynn, second by T. Nierman, to adjourn this Strategic Planning Session of the Woodstock City Council to the next regular Council meeting on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall. Ayes: D. Flynn, L. Lohmeyer, T. Nierman, W. Piersall, B. Seegers, G. Tebo, and Mayor M. Turner. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley
City Clerk